

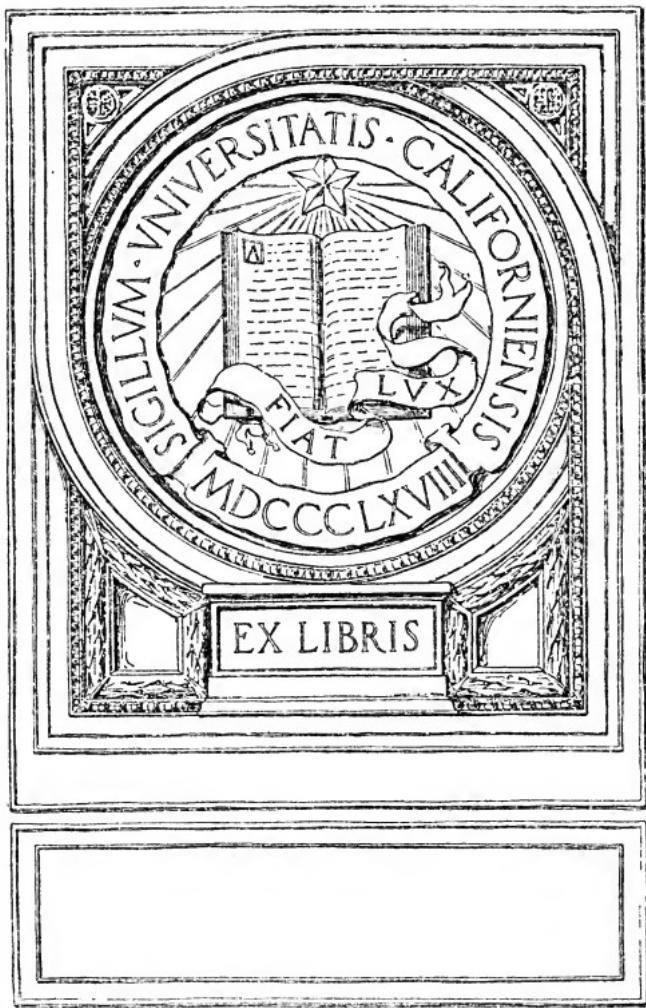
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The Healing Spring A Play

Play

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The HEALING SPRING

A PLAY

From an Indian Legend

BY

CAROL S. WILLIAMS



Originally presented by the Nipsic
Camp Fire Girls of Glastonbury, Conn.
on July 2, 1914

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CHARACTERS

Massecuppe, Sachem of the Nayaugs.

Nesaheeg, a Nayaug Brave.

Wah-Su-Lah, daughter of the Sachem.

Chemaun; an old Woman.

Mah-Kah-Wee, an Ojibway maiden.

Nayaug Maidens

Chelan

Opechee

Wawa

Owenee

Onaway

Braves and Maidens.

PROLOGUE

SCENE—The Nayaug encampment. The background, a forest with one or more wigwams in the foreground.

The Sachem stands in the centre-back, in war costume. On the stage are grouped the women of the camp; besides the maidens, who may wear the regulation Camp Fire costume, there should be a number of older women, who may wear Indian blankets over the costume.

One by one the Indian braves file slowly past in the background, in front of the Sachem, to the sound of muffled drum beats. The women stand erect and proud, watching them. When all have gone, the Sachem begins to speak.

Note:—The play was given out-of-doors, in a naturally beautiful setting, which lent much to the beauty of the performance. Boy Scouts, and other masculine friends took the parts of the the braves and Sachem. The music is an essential part of the play, but the songs may all be sung behind the scenes, so it will not be necessary to demand solo voices of the actors.

SACHEM—

Stay you here, oh Nayaug women !
We must leave you, though defenseless.
See to it that you are fearless,
Worthy of the name of Nayaug !
All our braves must journey northward
To the land of the Ojibway
Who have challenged us to battle—
And they are a mighty nation,
But our lands must be defended.
Fare ye well !

WAH-SU-LAH (running forward)—Farewell, my father !

(The Sachem places his hand for a moment on his daughter's head, then goes silently off the stage. As he goes out, the "War Song" is heard, sung either by one voice or a chorus. The women stand listening, as it grows fainter and fainter in the distance.)

(CURTAIN.)

ACT I.

Two Months Later. The scene is that of the prologue. The Indian maidens, all but Wah-Su-Lah, are busy at their weaving.*

OPECHEE—I am weary of this weaving,
How my eyes smart in the firelight !

*Note—If electric lights are used for the stage, let the picture be seen first by firelight; the fire, built in the left hand front corner of the stage, is a picturesque addition, and may be lighted by one of the maidens sitting nearest. As the light becomes brighter, the maidens are seen to be industriously weaving. After a full minute's tableau, the lights may be switched on.

OWENEEN (piling more wood on the fire)
Always was Opechee lazy.

CHELAN—And you eager for fault-finding!

WAWA (rising and starting toward wigwam)—
If we had Wah-Su-Lah with us
You would make your words more gentle.

CHELAN—Aye, we miss her happy singing,
Miss her joyous voice and laughter.

OPECHEE—Two long days without Wah-Su-Lah,
Leader in our games and dances!
Would I knew where she had vanished.

OWENEEN—She was strange and sad, and fearful
For her father's life,—our Sachem.

CHELAN—Aye, she trembles for her father,
Trembles lest he fall in battle,
Lest she soon will hear his death song.

OPECHEE—Where could she have vanished, think you?

CHELAN—Nay, I know not.

WAWA (reappearing from wigwam)—
But we need her!

Were she sitting here among us,
We would face our fears more bravely.

CHEMAUN (appearing from wigwam)—
On to work, my little sisters!
Let your fingers grow not idle.

OPECHEE—But we've worked all day, oh mother,
In the cornfields hoeing, hoeing.
Do you wonder that we're weary?

WAWA—And in spite of all our labor
Fields are lying dry and barren.
Oh, Chemaun, shall we starve: What think you?

CHEMAUN—'Tis the ban of the Great Spirit
Heavy laid upon the Nayaugs

For the war with the Ojibway.
Not till peace shall be among us
Will our corn and grain fields flourish.

ONAWAY—Two long moons have passed already,
Since our braves departed, two moons,
And no word has come to cheer us.

CHELAN—Have they perished, think you, Chemaun?
You, who have the gift of seeing?

CHEMAUN—All my gifts have left me; sightless,
Yet I tremble for the outcome.
Dark have been the birds of omen,
And last night in vision flying
Came the spirit of the Thunder,
Saying that our chief was dying,
That his death would bring destruction,
For he leaves no son behind him,
No one but the maid Wah-Su-Lah.

(Some drop their work and hide their faces in despair.
Others gaze sorrowfully into the fire. Wah-Su-Lah has entered unnoticed while Chemaun is speaking.)

WAH-SU-LAH—No one but the maid, Wah-su-lah?

OPECHEE—Oh, Wah-Su-Lah, stay here with us!
Lonely have we been without you.

WAH-SU-LAH—I have been upon the mountain
Praying there to great Wakonda,
Praying for my father's life.

CHEMAUN—Little Sister, did a vision
Come to you there on the hilltop?

WAH-SU-LAH—In the clouds I saw a battle
Fiercely waging, arrows flying . . .
And my father fell—Oh sisters,
Even now he may be dying.

CHEMAUN—Put your thoughts upon our Sachem,
Sing the Weton song, my children!
Help he needs; we must not fail him,

If by thinking of the absent
We may help them win the battle.
Call the maidens from the lodges!

(Two maidens run to the background, giving a signal with uplifted arms. The other maidens steal in from different directions, forming at once a large circle, to sing the Weton Song.**)

SONG—

E ya he!
All the tribes shall hear of our Sachem.
E ya he!
O put forth your strength,
O put forth your strength,
Truly this shall come to pass,
Shall come to pass,
Shall come to pass.
E ya he!

**Note—The singing of the Weton Song is an old custom found among the Western tribes. It is described in Miss Fletcher's book, "Indian Story and Song from North America," Small, Maynard & Co., publishers). The women believed that by thinking and singing of the absent warriors, they could be helped to victory.

The maidens, having formed a circle, begin to sing "E ya he," taking three steps around the circle, clockwise, swinging their arms straight up on "ya," and facing toward center of circle on "he." "All the tribes," etc.—they bring arms down, and stand motionless while singing this phrase, "E ya he"—the three steps clockwise, and raising arms is repeated as before. "Oh put forth your strength"—arms are held out straight in front and then swayed rhythmically from right to left with the music. "Truly this shall come to pass"—the right hand is held up while each maiden faces toward center. "E ya he, Oh put forth your strength"—repeats the motions as before. The song may be so effective that it will bear repetition.

O put forth your strength,
O put forth your strength,

(At end of song, Nesaheeg comes slowly in and stands by the fire silent. The maidens group around him in suspense, waiting. At last Wah-Su-Lah steps forward.)

WAH-SU-LAH—You have brought us news, Nesaheeg
Tell us quickly.—

NESAHEEG— O, my sister,
Sad is what I have to tell you.

WAH-SU-LAH—Tell me of my father! Tell me!

NESAHEEG—Only few will be returning

From the war with the Ojibway.

We were brave, but they were stronger,
Great in numbers, and they drove us
From the lands we were defending,
Drove and slaughtered us—the Navajos.

WAH-SU-LAH=And my father?

NESAHEEG— Yea, Wah-Su-Lah,
Our great Sachem, sorely wounded,
In a litter they will bring here,
They who have survived the battle.
Be ye ready, for he comes soon.

(Exit.)

CHEMAUN—Woe, woe is come upon us!
With no Sachem to command us
We shall die, we helpless women,
With no warriors to defend us.
E-wo-e, my heart is heavy!

(Mah-Kah-Wee's voice is heard singing in the distance, coming nearer. The song she sings is the "Omaha Tribal Prayer" as found in Ernest Thompson Seton's "Book of Woodcraft." At last she enters, carrying a flaming torch. The Nayaug maidens stand back, surprised and awed.)

MAH-KAH-WEE—Hail, my sisters of the Camp Fire!

OPECHEE—Welcome, stranger. Come among us.

We are sad, but we would have you

Come and by our Camp Fire rest you.

MAH-KAH-WEE—On a quest I come, still seeking,

For a spring of healing seeking.

Know ye of a spring, whose waters

Have the magic power of healing?

CHELAN—Nay, I know of no such waters.

WAWA—Nor do I.

OWENEEN—Nor I, Owenee.

ONAWAY—You have come in vain, O stranger.

Had we such a spring of healing,

We would heal our wounded warriors

That they might go forth and battle,

Fight again the base Ojibway.

CHELAN—Have you wandered far in searching?

MAH-KAH-WEE—From the Northland far I came here,

From a great and powerful people.

Mah-Kah-Wee, my name; Earth-Maiden

You would call me in your language.

Would ye listen to my story?

OPECHEE—Gladly would we hear your story,

Though our hearts with pain are heavy,

For our Sachem lieth dying.

MAH-KAH-WEE—Ah, then, you will know my sorrow.

For the great chief of my people

Many moons has lain in sickness.

We have tried all means of healing,

All have failed; he grows no better.

He was young and strong and fearless,

First in battle, noblest leader,

Bravest of our tribe of warriors.

I am his betrothed, Mah-Kah-Wee.

WAH-SU-LAH—Would that I might help you maiden,
Help you find this healing water.

MAH-KAH-WEE—Once when we had grown despairing,
Came a wanderer among us,—
Stranger he, from Southern waters,—
And he told us that Wakonda
Brought upon our chief this sickness
For that we had been too peaceful,
Stayed we safe at home like weaklings,
Had not conquered other nations.
We must go to war, he told us,
And the lands of five great nations
We must add to our possessions.
Then would sickness leave our chieftain;
He would rise again and lead us.

CHEMAUN—War and ever war they bring us!
If they would but hear a woman
They would know what sages know not,—
Only peace will heal your Sachem!

MAH-KAH-WEE (eagerly)—
Ah, you, too, have seen the Vision?
Only peace. Your eyes see clearly
This great truth? The peace of nations
We must strive for, we, the women
Of these mighty warring nations.

CHEMAUN—Powerless we are, Mah-Kah-Wee,
Though we long for peace,—

MAH-KAH-WEE—Not powerless,
For in wandering through the forest
I learned many precious secrets
From the birds, the Earth's own children,
Learned how all, save man the fighter,
Are in brotherhood united,
How if we but strive for friendship,
Learning each the other nation
To respect and trust and cherish

THE HEALING SPRING

5

We too, like the fury creatures
Of the woods, might peaceful live, and
War would perish!

WAH-SU-LAH—Strange Mah-Kah-Wee,
In your eyes a faith is shining.
Fain would I believe your message,
Fain would I, too, see your Vision.
War brings a dumb-aching sorrow,—
Misery—and heart-break; truly
We have learned this.

MAH-KAH-WEE—

Faith I have,

Oh Sachem's daughter! And you also,
You and all these Nayaug Maidens
Must believe and seek the Vision.

WAH-SU-LAH—We would learn from you, Mah-Kah-Wee.

MAH-KAH-WEE—Listen! In my early childhood

Great Wabeno, the Magician,
Gave a gift to me;—that henceforth
I should know the speech of Birdland.
As I wandered in the forest
All alone, one day, and weeping
For the sickness of my lover,
Came a swallow, flying northward,
And he told of healing waters,
Of a spring, far to the southward,
“Journey till ye find,” he bade me,
“Never wavering, or doubting
In your search; for you, a maiden,
Fearless and alone, shall find it,
Find this spring of mighty healing,
Healing for the wounds of nations.
Take a torch of whitest birchwood,
Symbol of your love and service.
None shall harm you, and in seeking
You shall bring peace to your people.”

CHEMAUN—What the name of this your people,
Oh, Mah-Kah-Wee of the Northland?

MAH-KAH-WEE—I? I come from the Ojibway.
(The maidens draw back in horror.)

OWENEE—From the Ojibway!

MAIDENS—The Ojibway!

WAH-SU-LAH—From the slayers of my father!

OPECHEE—Leave us, leave us, false Mah-Kah-Wee!

CHELAN—Nay, but let us take her prisoner,
Keep her as a hostage; slay her,
If our chief comes to us dying.

ONAWAY—Let us take her.

(All rush forward, as if to seize her. Mah-Kah-Wee stands erect, looking at them with infinite love and sorrow in her eyes. She holds her torch high, and the maidens shrink away.)

MAH-KAH-WEE—Touch me not, Oh Nayaug maidens,
For this torch of Love the symbol,
Holds you back from hateful anger.

CHEMAUN—Stay! What would ye do, my sisters?
Do you wish for peace and healing,
Yet would harm this stranger maiden?

MAIDENS—(stepping back rather shamefacedly)
Nay, but she is an Ojibway.

OPECHEE—Yet for my part I'd not harm her.

WAH-SU-LAH—(Who has been standing alone and thoughtful)—

Oh, Mah-Kah-Wee, I, Wah-Su-Lah,
Daughter of the Nayaug Sachem,
I would crave for your forgiveness.

MAH-KAH-WEE—It is granted, sweet Wah-Su-Lah.

WAH-SU-LAH—You are on a quest, Mah-Kah-Wee.
Go in peace; may the Great Spirit
Like the flying bird, befriend you,
May you find the magic water.

MAH-KAH-WEE—Then I go, my torch to guide me,
And the birds shall be my helpers,
Till I find this spring of healing.

(Starts towards the back of stage.)

CHEMAUN—Stay, Oh maid of the Ojibway!

Stay a moment! . . .
Long ago,—I scarce remember,—
'Twas when I was young and eager,
Swift to climb upon the mountain,—
Our old Sachem—Ah, what was it?—
Told us of some wondrous secret
Lying hidden in a fountain . . .
There were magic powers of healing
In its reddened waters lying,—

WAH-SU-LAH—Reddened waters, say you, mother?

Reddened waters, on our hillside?
As I came down from the mountain,
Down from praying for my father,
I passed by a spring that rippled
From a rock, down the long hillside,
And its waters were all reddened:
Could this be the spring of healing?

MAH-KAH-WEE—Swift I go in search.

WAH-SU-LAH— And, sister,
If perchance you find the magic,
Give us—

MAH-KAH-WEE—Aye, your wounds shall know the
healing of the magic water.

(Exit)

(As she goes out, the death song * is heard, sung behind
the scenes. The group of maidens stands motionless,

*Note—Hiawatha's Death Song, found in Frederick R. Burton's "American Primitive Music" (Moffat, Yard & Co., publishers). The name of the Sachem, "Massecuppe," may be substituted for Hiawatha's name in the song.

Wah-Su-Lah slowly, as if dazed, starting towards the entrance.)

WAH-SU-LAH—They come! It is my father's death song.
(Slowly procession files in, four warriors bearing the Sachem in a litter. The warriors group themselves in the background. Wah-Su-Lah kneels by her father.)

WAH-SU-LAH—Father, Oh my father, listen!

It is I, your maid, Wah-Su-Lah.

Leave us not, my father

O, he hears me not.

(Throws herself across the litter. "Doubt: A Death Song," from Burton's "American Primitive Music," is sung behind the curtain.)

(A moment of silence follows the song, in which Wah-Su-Lah listens close to her father's heart. Then Mah-Kah-Wee's voice is heard again, singing "Mah-Kah-Wee's Return.")

Enter Mah-Kah-Wee, running with a birch-bark cup filled with water.

MAH-KAH-WEE—Joy be with you, Oh my sisters!

Joy to you and to my people!

I have found the healing water.

WAH-SU-LAH (rising and reaching out her hand for the cup)—

MAH-KAH-WEE—Let your father drink, Wah-Su-Lah.

(Wah-Su-Lah holds the cup to his lips. He rises slowly to a sitting posture, supported by two warriors.)

SACHEM—What wonder have ye worked, my people?

I but now have sung my death song,

Yet I feel my strength returning.

MAH-KAH-WEE—O great Sachem, I Mah-Kah-Wee,

*"Mah-Kah-Wee's Return" may be adapted from two melodies in Mr. Burton's book,—i. e., "The Morning Star" and "In the Sugar Camp."

THE HEALING SPRING

I, a maid from the Ojibway,
Brought to you this healing water
From your spring. I name it Nipsic,
Place of Healing Waters, Nipsic.

SACHEM—As you speak, Ojibway maiden,
Comes my strength back, slowly, slowly.
You have rendered noble service
You have shown a healing spirit.

MAH-KAH-WEE—O great Sachem of the Nayaug,
War has been between our people,—
We the conquering, you the vanquished.
In our blindness we sought healing,
We sought healing for our chieftain
Through a cruel war; forgive us,
For the healing of our chieftain
Is not found in strife and conquest,
But in peace, whose healing waters
Can alone bring health to nations.
May peace ever be between us,
As I now have brought you healing
In the name of the Ojibway.

SACHEM—May there now be peace between us,
Peace that never shall be broken.

MAH-KAH-WEE—Then farewell, great Massecuppe,
Fare ye well, O Nayaug maidens,
And Wah-Su-Lah, you, my sister,
May we meet again in friendship.

(She goes swiftly into the forest, beginning to sing as she leaves the stage. Her song dies gradually away in the distance, "Mah-Kah-Wee's Return.")

(Curtain)

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